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HEBREW AND PURITAN.

ANALOGIES are like metaphors: if driven too hard they over-shoot their mark. This holds good of historical analogies as of all others; for though nothing can be *primâ facie* more obvious than that history repeats itself, the historical analogist is at once confronted with the fact that history never repeats itself entirely or exactly. Amid the sinuosities of its movements we may here and there find the lines running in a parallel course, but they immediately cross or diverge, and the parallelism itself is never absolutely true. Still, the fabric of the present is all reared upon the past, and old materials inevitably reappear, old experiences recur, old forms are renovated. More than this, the old *spirit* re-arises to animate other and strange substance, and from time to time, just as in our individual lives, we are continually presented with something which has an appearance already familiar to us of old. The deeper the springs we touch or approach, the more profoundly is this true. Wordsworth's *Intimations of Immortality* reached down to the very fountains of his being; so, similarly, wherever the phenomena of history represent stirrings of its procreant and primeval source, we may be sure that kindred manifestations will arise elsewhere, or else-when, bearing no uncertain marks of likeness and affinity. For though the life-tree Igdrasil has many boughs, it has only one root.

The historical analogy between Hebrew and Puritan is one of this kind, and is one of the most remarkable which history can produce. Both as regards their outward vicissitudes and the inward spirit of which these vicissitudes were the fruit, we may observe how curiously akin

the English Puritans were to that other Israel of God with whom they delighted to compare themselves. In tracing this analogy I shall observe that, like all analogies, it is not complete, that it is incomplete in a most significant respect, and an attempt will be made to discover why this was so. But, meanwhile, as to the analogy.

In the Puritan, as in the Hebrew, we find a people animated by an intense spirituality, filled with the same consciousness of the ever-present guidance of a Divine Hand, irresistibly swift to behold the finger of God in everything, from the pride of kings to the sparrow's fall. Like the Hebrews, the Puritans felt themselves to be a peculiar people, bound together by a Divine strength, favoured of God as none others were, and possessing the only true spiritual light.¹ They may even be said, in a sense, to have had their House of Bondage, their Pharaohs, and their long years of servitude in the persecutions they endured under James and Charles. Under an oppression which recalls the condemnation to make bricks without straw, they developed a seclusive spirit, in which, like the persecuted Hebrews, they sought in their sect and party the solace of a bereaved patriotism, or, for safety, fled beyond the borders of the land into "howling wildernesses." They had their Moses, too, and their deliverance, their Red Sea, their Desert, their Promised Land; for what but these to them was their leader and lawgiver, Cromwell, their passage of blood through the Civil Wars, their political estrangement among peoples, their triumphant realisation of a commonwealth of saints? They had also their reduction of the Philistines and the idolaters, which they accomplished with the unsparing Sword of the Lord and of Gideon. They slew the false kings, drove out Baal and

¹ On the presentation of Manasseh ben Israel's petition that the Jews should be allowed to settle in England, Cromwell, in reply to the English clergy, "flourished a good deal on religion prevailing in this nation, the only place in the world in which religion was taught in its full purity."---*Spence's Anecdotes.*

the false prophets from their sanctuaries, and set themselves to purge the land until the abominable thing was beyond their borders.

If these comparisons appear too far-fetched and fantastic to carry any weight, let us examine this historical parallel with closer regard for particulars. A different and far truer parallel will be discovered when we compare the inspiration and temper of the two peoples; but meanwhile let us remark for a little the striking resemblance between the Puritan rising in England and the Maccabean revolt of Israel. When Alexander overran and conquered Persia and Egypt, only to leave his vast dominions at his death a prey to anarchy under his generals and successors, a bitter future was in store for Judæa, and the alarming prodigies said to have accompanied the death of Simon the Just were only too ominous of the dire calamities that were to ensue. Between Egypt on the one hand, and the Seleucid monarchy founded at Antioch on the other, Judæa lay exposed a helpless prey to both sides, and fell the alternate victim of Antiochus or of the Ptolemies. It little needed the treachery, the intrigues and civil dissensions, the legal exactions and illegal pillage of her native rulers, to complete the misery of a small and powerless nation, so overpowered and oppressed from without. Such a nation little needed the whips of Jason and of Menelaus, when it already had the scorpions of Antiochus, surnamed Epimanes. One result productive of good, which accrued from the conquests of Alexander, was the world-wide dissemination of the humanising influence of Greece; and one form in which the madness of Antiochus manifested itself was to enforce this influence upon the Hebrews by persecution. His maddest act was his attempt to extirpate the religion of Judæa, and to enforce as a substitute the religion of Greece. After a successful reduction of Egypt, a party-rising in Jerusalem, under Jason, gave him a plea for turning upon the rebellious city. He marched in without resistance gutted every court of the Temple, and to confirm his insane

contempt for the religion of the people, he sacrificed a sow upon the altar, and caused every corner of the holy place to be sprinkled with swine-broth.

But this only nerved the Jews to more concentrated energy, and drove them to combine their political with their religious feelings. When, two years later, he aimed at the total extermination of Judaism, he had to encounter a people embittered by humiliation, strengthened by suffering, more passionately devoted than ever to their land, and creed, and customs. Seeing in brutal force the only way to break the spirit of this proud and lonely people, the madman did not scruple to use that weapon. Upon a Sabbath, when the people were peacefully engaged in their devotions, he sent a large body of soldiers to Jerusalem with free orders to murder every man, seize every woman, and pillage and dismantle the city. His will was mercilessly executed. After the first atrocities had been completed, a fort was built upon Mount Zion, and furnished with a garrison to over-awe and compel the citizens. All public services were at an end. No song of praise or call of prayer was heard save that of Pagan invocation. The Temple itself was formally dedicated to Zeus of Olympus. The rite of circumcision was prohibited. The eating of forbidden flesh was enforced. Every characteristic Judaic rite was rigidly interdicted, and an edict for religious conformity was as rigidly carried into execution. The compulsion was terrible, but the resistance was stern ; and the cruelties and martyrdoms which the victims would endure rather than bring their faith to shame, equal in severity the worst persecutions under the Christian Church. So severe was it, that the Jewish faith seemed near extermination.

The Puritan persecution under Laud was a trifle compared with this ; but the origin, the purpose, and even the circumstances of the persecution were similar. A people, under a civil power which they legally acknowledged, desired to worship God in their own way. The civil power said, "No ; you shall forego your mode of worship which

we hold to be rebellious, and you shall worship after ours, which you hold to be idolatrous. If you refuse, we shall compel you, and punish you." The origin of both persecutions was a difference in creed and worship. The aim of both was to destroy a form of religion which did not accord with that favoured by the superior authorities. The attendant circumstances in both cases were insult, outrage, degradation, and cruelty of the most atrocious kind, confronted in both cases with the same stern refusal and bitter suffering. Laud, with his High Commission, could excommunicate, imprison, set in the stocks, whip, brand, mutilate, as his method of "making the Church's discipline felt as well as spoken of;" Antiochus had similar modes of correction, only less modern and more barbarous. The details are unimportant. Where he could hang two women with their circumcised infants hanged round their necks, Laud could slit Bastwick's nose, and crop Prynne's ears a second time, after they had been sewed on once already.

From this reign of terror Judaism was rescued by the revolt of the Maccabees. If one were inclined to press our analogy home, one might find in Mattathias's refusal to pay the Syrian tribute, the counterpart of Hampden's refusal to pay Ship-money, and again, in the summary vengeance taken on the King's officer, the counterpart of the murder of Buckingham. But other points of resemblance are sufficiently remarkable. The Maccabean, like the Puritan leaders of the revolt, issued from an obscure part of the kingdom. Till his determined stand against the tyranny, Mattathias was an unknown private gentleman, of the now obliterated township of Modin. Having once taken action, he summoned those who were willing to join him, and fled to the hills. There he maintained a guerilla warfare, destroying heathen altars when he could, and punishing apostates, but chiefly keeping alive the old fire of devotion by maintenance of the injured faith. Upon his death the war was carried on with fresh vigour by his son Judas, who became at once the heart and

head of this insurrection. He knew that Antiochus had exhausted his resources by lavish and ill-timed prodigality. He knew, also, that the soldiers who came to fight him were mercenaries, unfit to cope with men who fought for their creed. But he knew, also, that his force was small, and that his sole strength rested in the absolute devotion of his followers to the cause for which they battled, in an enthusiasm stronger than the fear of death for the law of Moses. He, therefore, weeded his ranks before he risked them in the battle-field. All who had fears, or who had ties which called for their return, were at liberty to go; let only those remain who were ready to face death in that cause. He was left with a decimated force, but one against which his mercenary opponent had no hope of victory—a force consisting of men inured to every hardship, and fixed in a faith like adamant. Skirmishes followed: every encounter was in Judas's favour. The Syrian troops could accomplish nothing against his hill warfare. At last the revolt became too serious for Antiochus to trifle with, and an overwhelming force was sent to quell it. When Judas beheld an army of 40,000 foot and 7,000 horse advancing against his small and ill-equipped regiment, and bringing with them a train of slave-merchants to purchase those who should be captured, he called his little band together at Mizpah and fasted and prayed. Glorious if sorrowful memories clustered round this ancient inheritance of Judah.¹ If the sacred fire was now extinct and the sanctuary desolate, there still dwelt near them a recollection of the victorious assemblages of old, when Israel was gathered here together under Joshua and Jephthah and Samuel. Having so reawakened the heroism of ancient Israel in his consecrated band, Judas advanced to meet the enemy. The struggle was brief and decisive. By a stratagem he fell upon their unwatchful camp while one-half of it was out on an expedition to

¹ Joshua xv. 38.

surprise his own ; the expeditionary force returned baffled, only to find their camp in flames, and an exultant foe waiting to complete their discomfiture. A second victory beyond Jordan closed the first campaign. Next year a second short and equally decisive campaign against Lysias left the victorious Maccabee free to enter in triumph the desolate and shrub-grown streets of Jerusalem, and to commence the work of purification and repair. Bitter cries of lamentation over the profaned and ruined city, blending with the ordered cadence of martial sounds, rose to a jubilant note of triumph and of praise as the broken gates again lifted up their heads for the entrance of the King of Glory, as a blameless priesthood once more offered sacrifice upon a restored altar whose sacred flame was kindled at no unholy source,¹ and as a regenerated people gathered upon Zion to celebrate a new dedication in a festival which was henceforward to commemorate a redeemed nationality.

Have we not here a very remarkable counterpart to the Puritan revolt and triumph under Cromwell—the revolt of an oppressed people driven to despair by the same means and in a similar cause? Charles, like Antiochus, had exhausted his finances, and to replenish his exchequer had recourse to the same illegal exactions. His policy of persecution, like that of Antiochus, was founded both on political and religious grounds, for the Puritans, like the Jews, were fighting both for their political rights and for their religious faith. Cromwell, too, like Judas, saw that hireling troops could never stand their battle-ground against men fighting for a principle. “You must get men of a spirit,” he said to Hampden; and the spirit he enlisted was the religious enthusiasm of his cause. Like Judas he weeded his troops. He would have “none but praying men in his ranks,” men who knew what they were fighting for, and to whom their cause was dearer

¹ “Striking stones, they took fire out of them.”—2 Macc. x. 3.

than life. He employed that strength which had proved itself ready to suffer martyrdom for a faith, and he was soon at the head of the best fighters in the world. Those fighting Puritans stripped the soldier's life bare of its romance. They possessed not a vestige of the old chivalry. But the Royalists withered under their stroke like grass at the touch of lightning. The triumph of the faith once established, Cromwell's first energies were directed, as those of Judas had been, to the rehabilitation of the public worship, to the "expulsion of all those who might be judged any way unfit for that work, who were scandalous and the common scorn and contempt of that function,"¹ and to the election of a tried and approved sacerdotal body. For the establishment of the Commonwealth was to Cromwell also an act of adoration, and although there was no Temple to be consecrated anew with solemn festival, yet his first Parliament commemorated its opening on "the greatest day that England had ever seen"² by the solemnisation of public worship on the Lord's Day in the Abbey Church at Westminster.³

The comparison might be extended to further particulars of these two remarkable revolutions, and the parallel still further prolonged. We might compare, for instance, the treachery at Joppa, and Judas's revenge, with the Irish massacre and Cromwell's castigation of Drogheda and Wexford; or in the Maccabean subjugation of the malcontents in Gilead and Galilee we might see the analogue to Cromwell's reduction of Ireland and Scotland. But we are nearer the cardinal point of resemblance between the two peoples when we come to Cromwell's personal sympathy with the Jewish race. Banished from England four hundred years previous, the Jews hailed the advent of the Puritan Revolution, with its subversion of Monarchy and its establishment of a Holy Commonwealth, as an oppor-

¹ Cromwell's Speech to his first Parliament.

² Cromwell's Speech to his first Parliament.

³ Sermon by Mr. Thomas Goodwin, on *The Deliverance out of Egypt*.

tunity for an attempt to regain a legalised footing within the realm. Manasseh ben Israel, a Rabbi of Amsterdam, took up the cause with zeal; petitioned Long Parliament and Little Parliament; presented the general congratulation of the Synagogues of Holland upon the accomplishment of these political changes; recognised in them the hand of God; pleaded his case with eloquence and ingenuity, advancing the temporal advantages to be gained by England in the furtherance of her trades and the sincere attachment of the Jews to such a commonwealth of men of piety and learning. But the matter advanced no further until Manasseh reached the private ear of the Protector. Cromwell then assembled a Conference at Whitehall, 12th December, 1655, consisting of citizens, lawyers, and divines, "to advise by reason, law-learning, and Scripture-prophecy concerning the proposal of admitting Jews," (1) if it were lawful to admit them, and (2), if so, on what terms? The legality was at once decided, but opinion was inconclusive on the question of expediency. Cromwell, addressing the divines as "Men of God," asked if it were not their conviction that the Jews likewise should be called in the fulness of time into the Church? It was. Did not their duty then lie in settling the Jews within reach of the true source of light, instead of abandoning them to Papists and Idolaters? Then turning to the trading interest, he asked if the merchants really feared that "this mean and despised people should overcome in trade and credit the noblest and most esteemed merchants of the whole world?" No; they would bring their trade into English hands. It may be also that Cromwell foresaw occasion to avail himself of the rapid means of intercommunication open to Jewish traders and of their intimate and accurate cognisance of foreign affairs. He was so urgent for the scheme, that one of the conference afterwards declared he never heard a man speak so well. "But Scripture-prophecies, law-learnings, and lights of the human mind seemed to point the other way: and zealous Manasseh went home again." Still, by the

private sufferance of Cromwell the Jews did settle peaceably in England, and the requirements of Charles II. confirmed their quiet domestication.

The whole of the Commonwealth period, indeed, was a time of European stir upon the subject of the Jews, both as regards their learning and their politics. The Hebrew language had participated in the general impulse given to letters by the great Revival of the fifteenth century, and the Reformation of the sixteenth impelled scholars and reformers of the Christian Church to seek a first acquaintance with the substance of the Old Testament in its original tongue. Before the close of the sixteenth century Hebrew types were employed in printing, and of the period from 1600 to 1650 Hallam says, that "during no period of equal length since the Revival of Letters has the knowledge of the Hebrew language apparently been so much diffused throughout the literary world as in this."¹ The greatest knowledge of the Jewish language and literature prevailed from the reign of James I. to the Restoration, or, in other words, during the troubled period in England of the Puritan persecution, revolt, and supremacy. And this knowledge was by no means confined to the books of the Scriptural canon. The Rabbinical Literature, too, was deeply studied by others than the Jewish Rabbis, and by the Christian laity as well as the clergy. Our learned Selden has left the impress of his name and power here likewise, as he has done in many another field of scholarship.² So that the Puritan Period is remarkable not merely for study of the Old Testament Scriptures, though among the Puritans that was intense and continual. It became a matter of erudition as well as of religion; and familiarity, or, at least, partial acquaintance with Jewish

¹ *Literature of Europe*, iii., 444.

² It is interesting to notice that in the preface to the first edition of his *Polyglott* (pub. 1657), Brian Walton gives thanks and praise to Cromwell for help contributed. Later editions omit the Cromwellian reference.

literature, passed rapidly on from perusal of an incorrect and frequently incoherent translation of the Old Testament Canon to a knowledge of these books in their original tongue, and an extended survey of hitherto unexplored realms of Hebrew thought.

But the Jewish nation itself was meanwhile being stirred to its depths by a political agitation which affected the whole Jewish world. The idea of a Messiah had always been present to the Hebrew mind as an inspiration and a hope, an alluring fascination in prosperity, and a solace in the hour of darkest trouble. A Rabbinical edict might invoke a curse upon him who should calculate the time of the Messiah's coming, but it was powerless to subdue the fever of expectation that began to burn as one impostor after another appeared to stir anew the dormant fire: and when visions were beheld like those of Ezekiel, and a divine voice was heard proclaiming, "Your Redeemer is come: his name is Sabbathai Zevi," the prophetic utterance of the Sephiroth passed round the earth like the murmur of the limitless sea. Sabbathai preached in Jerusalem, proclaimed himself Messiah, assumed the pomp of royalty, so that even the Rabbis trembled. His fame reached the ends of the earth. Finance was paralysed. Embassies approached him from all quarters. Even his enemies acknowledged him in Hebrew characters. But when the Sultan tested his Messiahship by offering to shoot at him three poisoned arrows with the option of becoming a Mussulman, Sabbathai chose the easier alternative. The rising collapsed with the confinement of its leader, and the would-be Messiah died a vulgar death in a fortress near Belgrade.

It would be inaccurate to claim either for this Messianic excitement, powerfully though it affected European affairs, or for that new zeal given to the study of Hebrew letters by scholars of the Commonwealth period, a substantially operative influence in the infusion of Judaism into Puritan religious thought. Erudition cannot be said to have its

popular side, and, therefore, cannot be said to have a representative weight when the issues balanced are those of a great popular movement. Mere Hebrew scholarship, therefore, did not contribute anything of more than academic note to the Hebraizing of Puritan England. It was scarcely a calculable force in the permeation of the Puritan genius with Hebraism. This latter was a popular process, and it worked itself out through the English translation of the Bible and through the preachers whose sermons were leavened with that. Still the study of Hebrew Literature was a manifestation of a new interest in the Jews, and may be taken though not as a preponderant influence yet as a phase of the vast Judaizing process that was now going on.

Similarly, although the Messianic ferment of the middle of the century was a thing apart from England, it is significant to find that one ground of reason offered by Manasseh in his petition to the Commonwealth was his conviction of the immediate restoration of Israel, and, therefore, the advent of the Last Day. There were numbers of English Puritans to whom this argument would appeal in its literal acceptation. It would appeal to all those whose minds were inflamed with Millenarian fancies, to Major Harrison and the *doctrinaires* of the Fifth Monarchy, "that thing pretending more spirituality than anything else,"¹ who preached, if not the personal coming of Jesus, at least the immediate establishment of his Monarchy under the saints here on earth. The Fifth Monarchy, indeed, was only a crude form of the Messianic idea presented in a Christian dress. But apart altogether from this Millenarian fanaticism, whose ardour was of the same misguided and ignorant character as that of the zealots who went delirious round Sabbathai Zevi, and whose gospel was to force the mad claim that such fanatics were "the only men to rule kingdoms, govern nations and

¹ Cromwell : Speech to the first Parliament.

give laws to people, and determine of liberty and property and everything else,"¹—apart from this crazy apostolate there was in the general tenor of Puritan belief a close approximation to the broader lines of the Messianic idea, and between the two there existed a kinship of nature, which but for the intervention of dogma might have manifested itself as a kindred sympathy. For in Puritanism likewise there is something of that prospective character which is the cardinal feature of Jewish belief, something of that preparation and trust which constitute the essence of the Messianic hope. The belief or suggestion of those "Israelites without guile" with whom Coleridge delighted to converse, that "it may have been God's will and meaning as regards Messianic prophecy that the Jews should remain a quiet light among the nations,"² may in this respect be considered beside Cromwell's interpretation of the Fifth Monarchy hope, "that Jesus Christ *will* have a time to set up his reign in our hearts, and when more fulness of the Spirit is poured forth to subdue iniquity and bring in everlasting righteousness, then will the approach of that glory be."³ Apart from the general features of resemblance between Judaism and all forms of Christianity—for these resemble one another as parent and children—there is this particular similarity of mental attitude between the Hebrew and the Puritan faiths, their attitude of expectancy, their trust in prophecy, their recognition in what has happened of something preparatory and typical of what is yet to be fulfilled.

This itself raises a higher and broader issue than the simple and definite belief in a coming Messiah. In its higher aspect this belief assumes in the one case—that of the Jews—the complexion of a broad national faith, of a less clearly defined and less positive outline, but of a more spiritual essence; and in the other—that of the Puritans

¹ Cromwell : Speech to the first Parliament.

² Table Talk.

³ Speech to first Parliament.

—it widens into the conception of a universal scheme, which is slowly fulfilling itself, and for the realisation of which all things are working together. But this affinity, in the form of belief, combines itself further with a certain identity of matter. For the Puritans, though they declined to acknowledge the full significance of their plea, claimed to participate in the birthright of Israel, and the body and substance of their inspiration is constituted by the Law as much as by the Gospel. The entire course of the Puritan Revolution was to Cromwell—and he is representative of the general Puritan belief—the fulfilment of prophecy. After the expulsion of the Rump, “What is the Lord now a-doing?” he could write to an oracle of high Gospels in New England, “What prophecies are now fulfilling?”¹ He himself was “but a poor weak creature, and not worthy of the name of a worm; yet accepted to serve the Lord and his people”² He seemed to hear prophetically spoken to himself the words of Psalm cx.: “Sit thou at my right hand until I make thine enemies thy footstool: the Lord hath sworn, and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek; the Lord at thy right hand shall strike through kings in the day of his wrath.” But the prophecies which he heard spoken concerning himself and the cause he followed were all Jewish prophecies. He adapted the words of the Hebrew poets to the Puritan cause, and on his lips they became utterances prophetic of the Puritan triumph.³ He could encourage the Little Parliament with Hosea xi. 12: “Judah yet ruleth with God, and is faithful with the saints.” The saints were good Puritans, and these were God’s people. In the words of the psalm already quoted, “He makes his people willing in the day of his power,” he beholds God’s manifestation that this is the day of power, when, “through so much blood and so much trial,”

¹ Letter to Mr. Cotton, Pastor of the Church of Boston in New England, 2nd Oct., 1651.

² *Ibid.*

³ Speech to the Little Parliament, *passim*.

God had "made this to be one of the issues thereof—to have his people called to supreme authority." Immediately Isaiah xliii. occurs to him: "This people," saith God, "I have formed for myself that they may show forth my praise." "I say you are called with an high calling," he repeats; "and why should we be afraid to say or think that this may be the door to usher in the things which God has promised, which have been prophesied of?" He calls upon the Parliament not merely to look this way, but to endeavour; and, according to that prophecy of Daniel, "The kingdom shall not be delivered to another people." Truly "you are at the edge of the promises and the prophecies." The same speech closes with a lengthened application of Psalm lxviii.: "Let God arise; let his enemies be scattered"—a glorious prophecy, he is persuaded, of the Gospel Churches, and, he significantly adds, "it may be of the Jews also." "Then it prophesies that 'He will bring his people again from the depths of the sea, as once he led Israel through the Red Sea.' And it may be God will bring the Jews home to their station 'from the isles of the sea,' and answer their expectations 'as from the depths of the sea.' But sure I am, when the Lord shall set up the glory of the Gospel Church, it shall be a gathering of people as 'out of deep waters,' 'out of the multitude of waters.' Such are his people, drawn out of the multitudes and nations of this world . . . And, indeed, the triumph of that psalm is exceeding high and great, and God is accomplishing it."

Here we reach the very heart of Jewish inspiration, and listen to the very voice of Israel. Not merely the letter but the spirit of this assurance is Hebraic, even to the touch of what, for lack of a better word, may be termed the unsocial temper by which it is distinguished. It is certain that while the exile in Babylon knit the tie of consanguinity into an indissoluble bond of brotherhood, it had the further effect of promoting and confirming, if not of creating, that spirit of severe exclusiveness which hence-

forward marked the race. The return from the Captivity inaugurated the enforcement of the sternest discipline of the Law, the interdiction of alien marriages, and even the dissolution of such marriages already contracted, and the repudiation of wives and children. It gathered all the passionate affections of the Jewish heart round their city, their soil, their religion, their race. It witnessed the development of a lonely patriotism and of an estrangement among the nations, in which Roman writers discovered only an obstinate pride, and later historians have discovered a want of humanity. Their religion, no longer the loosely fitting garment it had been before the exile, clave to them as a divine vesture. It grew to be a passion which could be cruel even to their own if need were. It marked the seed of Abraham not merely as a race distinguished from the Gentile, but as a race distinguished by right of a religious superiority. In Puritanism we have a similar isolation, and a similar pride. The Saints likewise claimed to be a peculiar people. Nay, they claimed, as we have seen from Cromwell's speech, to be God's people in a truer sense than the very seed of Abraham. And the spiritual pride which developed itself out of the doctrine of regeneration was of a more assumptive kind than that which rested its authority on the rite of circumcision. It amounted to a sense of religious superiority, which, as Puritanism advanced in power, seemed to say through all its dogmatic and intolerant sects, "Stand apart, for I am holier than thou."

But Puritanism was not content to rest in the pride, the exclusiveness, and the intolerance of its multitudinous sects. Nor did it seek merely to diffuse its spirit as a quiet religious influence, like early Christianity, or to leaven the mass of public thought like the Methodism of a later century. It was more than sectarian, more than propagandist. Its leaders, charging themselves with the destiny of England, pressed on to build out of this agglomeration of schismatics and enthusiasts the fabric of a new State,

founded upon a new basis, and composed of new materia. They set themselves to erect a commonwealth of saints, and to establish Christ's kingdom upon earth. With the help of Cromwell's genius for administration, they succeeded for a time. Though under this bizarre Government the nation was kept from anarchy only by the sternest discipline of the sword, and though when the administrative genius was withdrawn, the fabric sunk into hopeless collapse, yet the holy Commonwealth erected itself, the saints ruled, the nation became a Church. Practically this Government of the Commonwealth was a military despotism, but it bore a resemblance to the Jewish theocracy, inasmuch as the religious end predominated over the civil. To employ an Aristotelian term, the *ἡθος* of this Puritan State was identical with that of the Jewish body politic. To both the idea of God was as the sun in the firmament. It was a Government of the people of God in behoof of the people of God for the praise and glory of God. As we read the letters and speeches of Cromwell, we perceive that not only was the whole course of the Revolution a marvellous working out of the will of God, but that in every act of political administration in this calling to which he had been preferred, the thought nearest and ever present to his heart was the welfare of the people of God. "Would all were the Lord's people!" he exclaims to the Little Parliament. "I would all were fit to be called." He preaches to his Parliaments, if not like a Hebrew prophet, at least like a Puritan divine. Under his regimen religion passes from the regulation of private manners to the disposal of public affairs. "If I were to choose any servant," he again tells Parliament, "the meanest officer for the army or the Commonwealth, I would choose a godly man that hath principles. . . . And I would all our magistrates were so chosen. This may be done; there may be good effects of this. Surely it's our duty to choose men that fear the Lord and will praise the Lord: such hath the Lord 'formed for himself.'" This was accomplished. Theory

passed into practice, without regard for congruity. Temporal and spiritual were merged into a single interest. Saints were elected to all public offices, and sanctity pervaded every institution of the realm, as it did the government of every Puritan household. The Government, in fact, submitted to a theocratic ideal.

It is not singular to find this kinship of *ἥθος* between the Puritan state and the Jewish, when we reflect upon the extent to which Puritanism was saturated with Jewish influences. The *ἥθος* of a state must always be a reflex of the character of its people, and here the power of the Jewish Old Testament had inter-penetrated Puritanism to its very marrow. Both peoples had the same source of inspiration. But the Puritans gave the world no new revealing light as the Hebrews did. They only took over the Hebrew revelation, claimed it as their own, and acted upon its inspiring strength. Though ultra-Christians in some aspects of their creed, they found in the Scriptures of the Old Testament rather than the New the fundamentals of their religious thought and conduct. The books of the Judges and the Kings furnished them a more potent incentive in their political walk and conversation than the milder records of the Evangelists. Moses and the Prophets spoke to them in the very voice of God. For was not Moses also *their* heritage? Were not the Prophets *their* heralds? Was not all Judaism but a preparatory scheme for *their* coming? So the Bible, and chiefly the Old Testament, became their one book. It was their sole literature, their intellectual and spiritual food, their guide, philosopher, and friend, their justiciary warrant and their high court of appeal. They conversed, disputed, preached in its very language. Their thought was moulded to its form. Its songs of triumph celebrated their victories, and their grief found utterance in its threnodies of lamentation.

But in spite of all this similitude in their outward history, in the *ἥθος* of their politics, in the spirit and temper of their religion, in their character as a people, in

their prospects, their inspiration, their claims, and their accomplishments, the Puritans never became truly Hebraic. With all their fervent spirituality, those sublime aspirations and that intense idealism, it is one of the most remarkable features of this revolution that the Puritans never produced a religious poetry. Ever since the first rhythmic prayer broke from the lips of man, religion has drawn to itself much of the finest poetical genius of all ages, whether it be the Hebrew who sings to the Lord his Shepherd, or the unknown author of the Veda, who foreshadows the Christian prayer to Our Father in Heaven, or that greatest of the Greeks, whose heart's cry rings out in the choruses of the Agamemnon. When we consider how the Puritans were nurtured by constant communion with such a literature as that of the Jews, we might have anticipated that some of their rarer spirits should have risen to take a place beside the Hebrew psalmist. It is true that the seventeenth century, with its social unrest and spiritual irritations, was an unfavourable time for the cultivation of poetry. But the Cavaliers could, amid the clash of arms, sing "passionate ballads, gallant and gay, martial songs like a trumpet's call;" and the troubles of the time did not sear the lyric hearts of Herbert and Vaughan. There is a very considerable religious poetry of the England of this time, but though nearly all the poets were ministers of religion, there was no room for one of them inside the pale of Puritan worship. Catholics and Anglicans alike find voice, but despite the force and fervour of Puritan religiosity, nowhere unless in Milton do we hear the music of high adoring song come from Puritanism. Nor did all the troubles and revolutions of Jewish history do other than contribute fresh inspiration alike to poet and to prophet. It was not the political and religious disquietude of the time, but something inherent in the nature of their religion itself which prevented the Puritans from having singers like the sweet singers of Israel. There was a radical difference in the constituent forces of the two reli-

gions that accounts for the absence of a Puritan religious poetry, that enables us to discover why, when they had seen the wheels taken from their Pharaoh's chariots they had no Miriam to lift up her voice crying, "Sing ye to the Lord, for he hath triumphed gloriously"; and when they had builded their Zion upon their enemies' necks there were no sons of Korah to make music in the Temple.

At no period throughout the whole range of Jewish history has the poetic voice been mute. Every great fact throughout its entire course, right down to modern times has left its impress on the Synagogue liturgy. Long before the Psalter was begun to be formed, from the first prophetic chant of Jacob over his sons, we have evidence of the rising strains that were to swell into the full peal of later prophecy. Apart from the general poetic character of the early books in language and in thought, these occasional lyrics are woven like stars into the texture of the narrative, and shine there with a particular glow. Such are the songs of Moses and of Miriam on the passage of the Red Sea; the swift little Pindaric over Heshbon of the Amorites¹; the vision of the Almighty to Balaam,² "How goodly are thy tents, O Jacob, and thy tabernacles, O Israel!" and the parable which he spoke in ecstatic reverie,³ "I shall see him, but not now: I shall behold him but not nigh!" Such are the words that proceeded "out of the midst of the fire, of the cloud, of the thick darkness with a great voice." Such above all is the song of Moses in the wilderness of Moab, which he wrote and taught to the children of Israel upon ending the proclamation of the Law, before he blessed the tribes and went to his quiet consummation. These are only suggestive of a great body of national lyrics now destroyed, and a rich cultivation of poetry, the full extent of which the irremediable loss of the book of Jasher during the Captivity prevents us from adequately estimating.

¹ Numbers xxi. 27-30. ² Numbers xxiv. 5-9. ³ Numbers xxiv. 17-24.

It is not till we come to the formation of the Psalter that we sufficiently discover the resources of Hebrew poetry: Job stands as a work apart outside of history. It is precarious criticism to enter upon an assignation to the several psalms of their dates and the circumstances which they commemorate. But we can see how the several books of the Psalter faithfully follow and reflect the general progress of Hebrew history from the anointing of David by Samuel, down to the rebuilding of the walls by Nehemiah and later. The first lyric period furnishes a full poetic record of the troubles and consolations, the hopes and fears and divine trust of David's chequered life. All the chief events and experiences of his career, whether as a shepherd, an outlaw, or a king, are commemorated in odes that had their first accompaniment from the harp with which he had beguiled the melancholy of Saul. But of so universal a strain were these, and so highly religious, that when the Ark was established in Mount Zion they could be collected and arranged for the service of the sanctuary.

Then the perils under Jehoshaphat are brought before us, the desecrations by Ahaz, the humiliation of Judah, the dangers from the Assyrians, laments for the divided kingdom, appeals for reconciliation, prayers of the faithful in the north thus exiled from the Holy City. The evil days of Manasseh and the good days of Josiah, the Captivity and the Return are alike reflected in hymns that bear witness to the readiness of the Jewish mind to catch the inspiration of passing events. The question of a Maccabean origin for some portions of the Psalter is too full of difficulties to be discussed here; but if, as some critics maintain, it was just the Maccabean period that was most fertile in poetic literature, this theory only extends the area over which Jewish poetry is the mirror of Jewish national life, and enlarges our estimate of the degree to which poetic utterance was a divine instinct of the Jewish mind.

For to the Hebrew, poetry was both prayer and praise. These scattered wild flowers of the Psalter thus garlanded for Mount Zion sprang from the very heart of their religion, and brought with them the aroma of purest worship. The duty of God's people in acknowledging and adoring his perfections called for the poet's skill, and alike in mercy and in affliction the poet's words became for the Hebrew the medium of direct communion with the Divine. No auxiliary was left disregarded which could deepen their impressiveness upon the people, and enhance their solemnity. The Levitical choirs were numbered by thousands, trained to all manner of musical instruments, and dressed in gorgeous apparel. The wealth, profusion, and splendour of the Temple decorations dazzled the eye, the soul-stirring pomp of ritual smote the imagination and the feelings; and as the whole congregation knelt with uplifted hands in reverence, the choral antiphon resounded through the holy place, fraught with the burden of a people's yearning towards God. Whatever poetry and music could perform, all that eye could see and tongue could utter were brought to minister to the Temple service. All the "far-stretched greatness" of the kingdom was made contributory to the mystic glories of the Mercy-seat, and all the emotional wealth of the Hebrew heart searched for tributes to bring before Jehovah.

The dominant note of the Psalter is praise of the perfections and glory of the God of Israel. His personal majesty was too awful to behold. Even his name was an unutterable word. But the heavens and the earth and the heart of man were full of manifestations of the power of him whose footsteps were unknown. The heavens declared his glory: the earth was his and the fulness thereof: behold his marvellous works among the deeds of men. Adoration can rise no higher than we find it in the Psalter. But all this objective adoration has its subjective side. It is for man to praise God, because his arm is mighty, and his hand is strong, and here we are led on to the moral

aspect of God's dealings with man. In the terror of his name, in the majesty of his glory, in the marvels of his creation and the omnipotence of his might, man must discover reason not only to fear and adore, but to follow and obey, and be dedicated to his service. So the fear of the Lord becomes the beginning of wisdom, and adoration merges itself in the appeal to righteousness. "Fear God," it is true, but "keep his commandments," for only then will the blessing follow. If calamities arise, if any of the dire curses of the Law descend, it has been for some disobedience. How shall this obedience best be shown? Who shall ascend to the hill of the Lord? He that hath clean hands and a pure heart. Mercy is there abounding, but there is also justice that will not swerve aside, and judgment that will surely follow; therefore, "blessed are they that keep judgment and do righteousness." "A brutish man knoweth not, neither doth a fool understand this;" only the righteous can see the beauty of holiness. Follow the Law, then, for "The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul; the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes." If these be forgotten, and the face of the Lord be turned away, nought remains but a desolate, forlorn, forsaken cry, "My God, my God, why hast thou left me?"

In this combination of religious enthusiasm with intense ethical fervour, we reach the source from which Puritanism drew the strength and sustaining force of its morality. The Puritan found these Psalms adapted to all his spiritual wants. His praise of God consisted in singing a translation of them, whether in public worship or by his own hearth. Their words were his prayers. So far as religious enthusiasm and ethical fervour went, there was nothing to have prevented a Puritan from having written them. Why, then, is Puritanism so barren? The Greeks, Romans, Arabs, and others have all, as well as the Hebrews, made their religion poetical. The Church of Rome and the Church of England have alike produced a sacred poetry. Why could

Puritanism *sing* nothing but a bald doggerel version of the Hebrew psalms ?

There was a twofold reason why the Puritans never reached that flower and fruition of their religion, and this double reason consisted both in what they lacked and what they had superabundant. They wanted that fulness of life which made David dance before the Ark, and enabled Solomon to deck an earlier bower of Acrasia and to write an earlier epithalamium. They wanted that richness of sympathy and closeness of communion which the Hebrews had with the elemental powers of nature, and with mere physical loveliness, their full recognition of the claims of earthly things, and that willingness to be human which underlies all their spiritual language. And they had in superaddition the Puritan dogma. Both by what they had and by what they had not, they were cut off from "the vision and the faculty divine." They knew that God was almighty; but they had no singer for him "who sitteth and poureth out the flood," whose voice "scattereth the flames and maketh the cedars of Lebanon to skip like a calf." They recognised him as their provider and comfort and support; but they had to go to the Hebrew to find that his presence to the thirsting soul was as waterbrooks to the panting deer. The sunrise was doubtless a sight to gladden their hearts; but to the Hebrew, "The sun hath pitched a tent in the heavens, from which he goeth forth as a bridegroom out of his chamber," as it were, rubicund and joyful. Their Gospel had a provision for mutual kindness, but they never sang of that brotherly love whose refreshing influences descend like the dews on Hermon. The brevity and pathos of human life were before them; but it was a Hebrew singer who saw that all flesh was but like grass which groweth up in the morning and in the evening it is cut down and withereth.

Man goeth to the dwelling of his fathers,
To his eternal home, and sees the light no more. . .
As sheep they are driven to שואל,
And those after them make them their song.

In the lyrics of the Hebrew singers the divine light is made to rim round the whole circle of life with an horizon of glory, while the world beyond the bourne is but dimly conceived of as a place of shadows, where there is "no work nor device, no knowledge nor prudence." Not till after the Captivity had the Hebrews more than a vague conception of that immortality which was to the Puritan "the be-all and the end-all." To him, as to the Greek, death was the gateway of a dreary *שואל* which he shuddered to enter. All his praises seek to cast a divine splendour round this life on earth. All his desire and his effort are turned to glorifying God without any expectation of the reward of enjoying him for ever. The keynote of his praise is God's glory upon earth. The Hebrew poets threw upon this life the light divine; but it was still this life which was of supreme interest to them, and God's world was to them this world. There is no asceticism here, no attempt to throw discredit upon earthly things, or to see only their "vanity and insufficiency," no suspicion of the pleasure derived from earthly glory, or of the feelings awakened by earthly beauty. Hence comes their fine sympathy with external nature and with the lower animal creation alongside of their concernment with Israel's destiny. They enjoy living, and have time to look round, and feel freely without suspecting the feelings which arise; and it is this plenitude and freedom of feeling which supplies them with all that is sublime and all that is tender in their imagery, from the light which covers Jehovah as with a garment, to the desolation of heart crying out like the pelican in the wilderness.

We are at once struck with the outward splendour of Judaism as contrasted with the austerity and bareness of Puritanism; and the contrast between the sensuous magnificence of the Temple-service and the wan, cold, colourless worship of a Puritan church is an index to the radical distinction between the Puritan and the Hebrew mind. To the former earthly pomp was a delusion and a snare.

He saw only the "vanity and insufficiency of temporal things." It was not this life, but the life to come, which was of sovereign interest to him; and had not his dogma forced him to regard creation as part of a Divine scheme, his conception of it would have logically issued in pronouncing creation to be a profound mistake. Death was to him not the entrance to a world of darkness, but the opening of the gates of glory and the passage into eternal bliss. His life was a fever of concentration upon one idea, the enjoyment of God hereafter, and this world for its own mere sake was of no manner of interest to him. His dogma ate into the fulness of human life. His conscience seared his imagination. His intellect was imprisoned in iron bands, that corroded his sympathies and made his vision like a sick man's dream. The splendour of the Elizabethan Renaissance, however much it might resemble Solomon in all his glory, made no appeal to such natures. It crumbled away as soon as their influence made itself felt, and what remained of it when they assumed the supremacy went down before them like their enemies on the field of battle.

The difference between the essential character of Judaism and that of Puritanism is that between an inspiration and a dogma. The Hebrew regarded life in its entirety through the eye of poet and seer; the Puritan viewed it through the warped lens of his creed. Hence where the one people sent forth prophets, the other could only produce theologians. Born of the wrong race, Aryan when they should have been Semitic, the Puritans aspired to the sublimity of the old Hebrews, and began to equip themselves as an Israel of God by anatomising the literature of the Bible into a scheme of prophecy and a theological system. The Old Testament became significant only as read in the light of the New, and both were made subordinate to the dogmatics of a hyper-Calvinistic Calvinism. Coleridge once said that he never fully realised the Divine beauty of the Anglican Litany until he once attended service in a Scotch

kirk. What would he have said had he been suddenly confronted with the chasm between Ezekiel and the Shorter Catechism with Proofs? When we think of the points of likeness once more between Hebrew and Puritan, and then, with our minds filled with the raptures and splendours of the Jewish prophets, we turn to the Puritan preachers, we ask if it is possible we can have perceived any likeness between the two peoples at all. We have descended of a sudden from poetry to casuistry, from prophecy to pettifogging. We find much expository acumen, much hard logic, much keen controversy, argument, sub-division, proof; but for literature only a mass of sermons, pamphlets, exegetical commentary, and Calvinistic cabbala. They cannot even write prose that is not heavy with pedantry and dull to distraction; far less can they smite the Divine harp of the sons of Asaph. For this religion has ceased to be poetical; its Orientalism has been crushed, compacted, and dried into a system of dogmatics.

It was precisely these dogmatics, and the unintelligible preachings in which they were expounded, those savoury discourses so nourishing to the faith if bewildering to the reason, that hardened the Puritan trust into an adamantine fixity. Their theory of life was based, it is true, on a mistake, viz., the complete divorce between spirit and sense. This is no mere repetition of the old conflict between Ormuzd and Ahriman, the light and the darkness, the forces that tend towards health and those that tend towards corruption. It implies a split in human nature itself, a division of the individual, one part against another, a house divided against itself. The supernatural within, the "vital spark of heavenly flame," alone tends Godwards to eternal life: the natural, with all its accumulated forces, is dragging the supernatural devilwards to eternal death. No reconciliation between these is possible. No murmur of harmony nor silence of peace can be felt until this natural, with its passions, however generous; its aspirations, however noble; its sensibilities, however tender; and

its wayward longings to make life beautiful and happy, has been buried beneath the altar of the heavenly flame. Body and intellect and sense, poor waifs in their garments of original sin, must be beaten down, mutilated, crucified; the soul alone must live. But the mistake once conceded and the strife closed, grace soars triumphant. A genuine old Puritan moved in the very presence of the living God. In tears and terror he had fought out with himself the battle of the spirit, and he came forth at last radiant at heart, in spite of his tristful exterior, with the jubilant prayer of victory upon his lips into the eternal light. There is something which dwarfs criticism with its imaginative grandeur and sublimity in such a conflict and conquest as this.

It is a fervour of this kind which we encounter in *The Pilgrim's Progress*. There we have fashioned forth to us the arduous course of a soul faithful to its ideal through a progress of frequent falls, and often baffled endeavour to a final well-assured triumph. The struggling soul is brought purified at last into the presence of the Divine Glory. How does it start? With the agonised cry of him who reads the writing on the parchment roll, "Flee from the wrath to come!" It advances through all the struggles of the conscience-tortured Puritans. Its voice reaches a pitch of shrieking intensity, but except to such as are under the same sectarian influence, its language is either devoid of spiritual meaning, or must be translated into a different spiritual speech. To most it is only a spiritual dialect, and its author the speaker of an unknown tongue.

But the true "accent of high seriousness" springs not alone from firmness of grasp, or tense seizure of any idea. That alone will furnish the keenness of the fanatic, but the greatness of the seer can only be attained by him who combines strength of grasp with largeness of vision. Peter the Hermit was not greater than Shakespeare, though the one rode the foaming crest of the European wave that dashed and broke round the Holy Sepulchre, and the other

lived through the scepticism of *Hamlet* ; nor was there any Puritan preacher whose earnestness could hold rank with Jeremy Taylor's, though Taylor vindicated the authority of

That capability and God-like reason
Which was not given to fust in us unused.

The Puritans attained to this earnestness simply because they had that view of life which their creed taught them, and regarding life as they did, with a partial and imperfect vision, their earnestness could only develop into that which it was—a species of monomania. It appears only as a fervour of concentration, each one's eye fixed on his own soul, until, like the fatuous Fakir, he believes that he has solved the infinite by continuous gazing on his own navel. It was not because the Puritan was too earnest for the trivialities of verse that he was incapable of artistic utterance ; he had shrouded his earnestness in the gloom of his creed. He had built out the softening light of our every-day sun, and sat waiting for the unearthly splendour and unfructifying glare of an unknown infinite. He had cut off the springs from which poetry is nourished, and those moments of supreme emotion which call for the impassioned utterance of the poet, found with him their most natural expression in the primitive mono-syllabic interjections.¹ He was smitten dumb by his creed. There was both a want and a superfluity in this religion—a lack of warmth and sweetness, an indifference or an insensibility to loveliness, an absorption in creed, and an idolatry of dogma, an agony of conscience robbed of its fruits by a torturing of reason, and issuing only in a distorted vision and a mutilated being.

JOHN G. DOW.

NOTE ON MILTON.—Since Carlyle edited the *Letters and Speeches of Oliver Cromwell*, English opinion on this period has been prone to fall into the latter of two pitfalls which invariably waylay the

¹ Cromwell remarks, in one of his letters upon the Scotch worshipping in Edinburgh, “after their usual fashion of groans.”

criticism of enthusiasts, viz., inadequate justice and excessive appreciation. It has become common to enlarge the meaning of the term Puritanism, so as to include all English Protestantism,—the extravagances of the movement being only regarded as ebullitions which are to be regretted, but which the violence of the times may easily condone. No critic of importance better illustrates this blunder than the late John Richard Green, and few passages in history are more ingeniously sophistical than that in which he endeavours to show that Spenser was "Puritan to the core." If any one cares to try, he may take the passage in Green's history, and by substituting the name Tennyson for Spenser, and the *Idylls of the King* for the *Fairy Queen*, employing the same line of argument and almost the identical language, he may as satisfactorily prove that the Poet Laureate is "Puritan to the core."

The same danger waylays the critic of Milton to a more slippery extent, because Milton did identify himself with the Puritan cause. We have to remember, in the first place, that the great English Revolution of the seventeenth century was political as well as religious. It began with a constitutional resistance, though it ended in a Puritan triumph, and among its constitutional elements was included much that had a far wider scope than all Puritanism combined. The constitutional opposition included gentlemen like Algernon Sidney—"What a gentleman he was!" exclaims Coleridge—whom, with all his fine moral qualities, no critic would dream of calling a Puritan. Having eliminated the non-religious constitutional element, we must further distinguish between what is merely Protestant in the opposition, and what is essentially Puritan. For the two are by no means identical. There was a national and patriotic dread of the power of Rome that might still make the established Protestantism of England totter, and there was this Protestantism carried to sectarian issues. The Puritan movement is as intelligible as the Gnostic heresy, and its idea has a sufficiently well-defined context. The movement is marked by unmistakable characteristics, it advances with a well-understood aim, and the name is a contemporary growth with the movement itself. To make the name cover something which its historical meaning will not justify, is simply to pervert history. To force upon the content of its idea an interpretation at variance with its historical conceptions, is as bad as our latest philosophico-religious attempt to force the Hegelian philosophy into the Westminster Confession of Faith.

Observing, then, that the political aspects of this revolution include more than Puritan politics, and its religious aspects more than Puritan religion, we are prepared to consider Milton's part in it and his relation to it, and the sense in which he is its representative as a

Puritan poet. In his youth we may say that Milton was not a Puritan at all. His father was born and educated a Catholic, trained in the amplest Elizabethan culture, a skilled musician and a lover of art; later he destined his son for the Church of England, though the poet's passion for liberty made him "church-outed by the prelates." His home influences made his life so singularly pure and noble as it was, and early inspired him with that high ambition to make of himself "a composition and pattern of the best and noblest things." His first tutor, however, was the Puritan who "cut his hair short," and his next was the ungainly and broad-tongued Scotch Presbyterian, Thomas Young. At one-and-twenty we find him writing in a strain of asceticism which indicates the beginning of that ineffectual struggle of Puritanism to obtain complete possession of his life. In his *Ode on the Nativity* we discover the future author of *Paradise Lost*, but the poet had not yet decided in favour of the Puritan cause. He had still the alternative before him; he could have joined hands with Lord Falkland, and realised this early promise in a truer sense than by writing Latin dispatches for the Commonwealth in the company of Bradshaw. When the political struggle bore in upon him, he could idealize both sides in *L'Allegro* and *Il Penseroso*. These poems derive half their charm and all their power from the condition of balance that still existed in the poet's mind, from the fact that he was neither Puritan nor Cavalier, neither saint nor roisterer. The same balance is continued in *Comus*, in which the praise of virtue takes the form of a Cavalier masque, and nearer to cavalier sympathy are the *Shakespeare Epitaph* and the *Arcades*. *Comus* is a rich idealisation of the best part of Puritan character by one who throws upon it the light of the Renaissance, but the idealist has not yet joined the sectaries. Not until *Lycidas* do we hear the first sound of battle. The poet comes down from "the starry threshold of Jove's Court" to hammer his sword upon an anvil. In the passage in which he introduces the enraged and menacing figure of the apostle Peter shaking his keys against the worldly clergy, we have already the controversialist and the partisan. There is already the mixture of poet and sectary which we find in *Paradise Lost*. He is still the singer of the Renaissance, but he is preparing for work that compels him to lay past his lyre. He has sounded the first note of the *Defensio pro Populo Anglicano*, and henceforth he is politically on the Puritan side.

Throughout his prose-period we hear the accent of the Puritan mingling with a sublime prose-poetry. He has the Puritan preacher's argumentative tone, and he carries into his argument the same Puritan spirit of narrowness and quibbling—the spirit that revels in quotation of texts, and clenches a knotty point by an appeal to chapter and

verse. He has the same intolerance, the same uncharitable and unsympathetic temper. It is vain to attempt to reason with him : he will simply shout louder, and call you ugly names. In his invective he wields his pen like one of Cromwell's pikes. When he goes to the Bible, it is not with the judicious temperance of the rationalists, but with the squinting eyesight of an Ironside sergeant. But here, also, he transcends Puritanism. Though ostensibly helping to fight the Puritan battle, he is contending for much that is inconsistent with Puritan authority. His call for liberty, whether in Church, or State, or domestic life, or private judgment, embodies demands which Puritan supremacy would never have conceded. Certainly Puritanism gave as little inspiration to the *Areopagitica* as it did to his treatises on Divorce.

While we bear all this in mind, it is unnecessary to say much about the later poems. *Samson Agonistes* is a Hebrew inspiration cast in a Greek mould. *Paradise Lost* (and the same remarks will apply to *Paradise Regained*) is, in several senses, the epic of Puritanism ; but it is far more. Being the product of a certain age, and that a most remarkable one, it would have been strange indeed if Milton had not assimilated the influences around him, and made his work so far a reflex of the age in which he lived. This is true of every mind from the highest to the lowest. *Paradise Lost*, then, like Milton's other literary work, is inspired both by the politics and by the religion of the Puritan revolution. But his religion is more than merely Protestant. It has the impress of Sectarianism upon it, and breathes the spirit, not so much of a great religious emancipation, as of a power that would bring the human intellect once more into thralldom. It is theological more than religious, and its set of theological dogmas is Puritan and predestinarian. It is Puritan in the special character of its vindication of the Fall of Man, Free-will, Original Sin, the Atonement, and other articles of the Westminster Confession. Disregarding its dogmatics, we further observe that it embodies less of the alluring influence of a creation born of love, than the harder constraint of the imperative of duty. We feel less the persuasion through loveliness of the moral ideal, than the compulsion of the moral "ought," a compulsion that indicates some alien power other than art keeping the artist from turning to the right hand or to the left, and making him work "as ever in the great Taskmaster's eye." But when we examine the merits and defects of the poem, we find that it is great precisely where it transcends Puritanism, and little where Puritanism predominates. It is Pagan as an Epic, Puritan as a Theodicy ; and the Theodicy half spoils the Epic. It breaks in upon us in dreary dissertations, exegeses apologetics, academic argumentations, abstruse dialectics from the schools, in which the poet disappears and the winged muse is dragged

in a ditch of dogma. For the *nexus* of the poem is one of dogma, and the author has set himself to dispute a thesis and write a commentary upon a Confession of faith, at the same time as he is constructing a work of art. Apart from this incongruity, we find that the best part of Milton's inspiration is drawn from what Puritanism rejected, from the Elizabethan Renaissance, from the serenity of Pagan Greece, from the warmth of Italy. Wherein the Bible gave him true poetic inspiration was exactly when he did not go to it as one seeking confirmation for the articles of a creed. He was enabled to make his work great, because he preserved what Puritan ethics interdicted, viz., a recognition of the æsthetical, and because he ignored the notion in which Puritanism is philosophically founded, viz., a divorce between Spirit and Sense.

J. G. D.
